

Key Stage 2 Assembly

A Courageous Walk

Year group: Key Stage Two

Resources: Map showing China, walking boots and flimsy pair of shoes (e.g. flip-flops) to demonstrate the difference

Assembly plan

Aims

To introduce the children to the story of Gladys Aylward.
To encourage the children to think about the different reasons why people walk - In history people have walked for different reasons driven by certain motivations and beliefs and, as in the case of Gladys Aylward, demonstrated great courage.

Introduction

Ask the children to think about different reasons for walking. Explain that the children are going to hear a true story about a remarkable lady in today's assembly.

Main presentation

Tell the children the story of Gladys Aylward, who was born into a working class family in London in 1902. She wanted to be a missionary in China and spent three months training at a mission agency but failed to pass the exams she had to take.
Still determined to go to China Gladys saved the little she earned as a maid until she had enough to buy her own train ticket to get there.
She finally left England on a journey that took her across Europe and Russia. Japan was at war with Russia and China, which made travelling in the region dangerous. She finally reached Yangcheng, China, in November 1932.
Gladys worked at an inn providing food and shelter for people travelling over the mountains. She also took in orphaned and abandoned children.
During her time there she was also appointed as a foot inspector. For centuries the Chinese had practiced foot - binding. From childhood, women's feet were tightly wrapped, preventing their normal development. Women therefore had tiny feet, on which they could walk only with slow tottering steps, which were thought to be graceful. At the time that Gladys went to China the authorities were outlawing this practice. Gladys was appointed by the local magistrate to inspect feet to make sure this practice stopped.

War came and the Japanese started bombing the mountain villages in the area where Gladys lived. By 1940 it had become too dangerous for her to stay in Yangcheng. Gladys and over 100 children she cared for had to leave.

She started on a dangerous journey of over 100 miles on foot that took them across mountains, over the Yellow River and around enemy soldiers. The journey took 27 days, it was exhausting and the nights were cold, but Gladys led the children safely to the province of Sian, where she continued her missionary work.

Gladys died on 3rd January 1970.
She was known as the "Virtuous One" in China.

Reflection

Ask the children to think about the bravery of Gladys Aylward.
Ask them to think about how important our feet are, and the sort of activities we do with our feet.

Do they know of any other courageous stories?

Ask the children to imagine where they would like to walk if they had 'magic feet' that could take them anywhere.